Response to CPR Recommendations Not Addressed in the Body of the EER Self-Study

The CPR visitation team made two recommendations that have not been addressed in the body of the EER self-study:

- Develop learning outcomes for technology and indicators to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Create longer-term budget projects to attain strategic objectives.

These recommendations are addressed below.

Develop Learning Outcomes for Technology

In response to the site visit team’s recommendation, USD faculty and information technology staff worked together to develop the following four learning outcomes for technology:

1) Technology makes course content accessible to students at all times.
2) Technology promotes communication between student and instructor, and among classmates.
3) Technology facilitates active learning pedagogy.
4) Technology enhances student teamwork and collaboration on projects.

CEE created posters to display these learning outcomes for technology at all of their Tech Talks, and they request speakers at these events to address these outcomes where possible during their presentations. Evaluation forms for these events also include questions about the learning outcomes. Dissemination of the outcomes continues, and discussions to develop measures of success and appropriate rubrics for assessment are in progress.

A faculty focus group met to discuss indicators of effectiveness for all four outcomes from a pedagogical perspective. This group suggested a few potential quantitative indicators, listed below, and agreed that quantitative measures will need to be supplemented with assessments of the quality of student learning. More focus groups will be needed for further refinement, some with ITS staff to ensure the feasibility of tracking these indicators.

1) Technology makes course content accessible to students at all times.
   - Learning Management Systems (LMS) commonly record access and usage by students. Total numbers indicating downloads of class materials, visits to chat rooms, participation in class online discussions, assignments submitted, and online quizzes taken are potential metrics that could be used to gauge student access. ITS can document information from courses using Blackboard, the university’s official LMS. However, not all faculty use Blackboard as their LMS, and some faculty choose not to use any LMS, so figures from ITS will understate this measure of accessibility.

2) Technology promotes communication between student and instructor, and among classmates.
   - Percentage of students in a class participating in online discussions, chat-rooms, or blogs.
   - Availability of faculty for online interaction and information.

3) Technology facilitates active learning pedagogy.
   - Number of courses using portfolio software that allows student to submit documents and artifacts for faculty review.
• Frequency and duration of collaborations between instructional technologists and faculty members to design technology-based learning modules, class activities, etc.
• Number of faculty participating in the annual Technology Showcase sponsored by ITS.
• Number of faculty presentations at CEE Tech Talks.

4) Technology enhances student teamwork and collaboration on projects.

• Number of group projects requiring online discussion.
• Frequency and duration of Skype conversations for group project discussions; for example, practicing language skills with students in other countries.

These learning outcomes, and subsequent discussions held to identify appropriate indicators, are important steps toward developing a common vision among faculty and information technology staff regarding the pedagogical application of technology. Although faculty are aware that ITS is trying to manage high demand for technology services from all divisions, standardized configurations are not always compatible with their teaching styles. A common vision would promote more formal and functional partnerships among ITS, CEE, and faculty to nurture pedagogical applications of technology. Such partnerships might include faculty working with instructional designers to develop course modules. ITS could more effectively partner with faculty to identify, select, design, and share new technology-based applications. Developing and enhancing a culture of sharing and active learning should become a priority.

Create Longer-Term Budget Projects

The CPR site visit team recommended that USD develop a longer-term budget process to assist in achieving strategic goals and objectives. Two years ago, USD implemented a five-year budget model designed to:

1) Increase the tuition discount rate over time.
2) Increase reserves for deferred maintenance.
3) Increase the endowment.
4) Increase cash reserves.

Focusing on these priorities has improved the financial stability of USD, one of the goals from the last strategic planning cycle. Also a Budget Working Group was formed to continuously assess the allocation of funds to USD’s strategic priorities. This group includes the deans, the vice-presidents, the chief information officer, the athletic director, and the chair of the University Senate.